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IBSSS MONTHLY REPORTS

Action Requested: Receive the IBSSS monthly reports.

Executive Summary: IBSSS continues to address the implementation of the Task Force recommendations especially in light of the three key areas that are guiding the work of the School in 2006-07:

- ◆ Finalize cooperative agreements among the Board of Regents, Department of Education, area education agencies, and the Department for the Blind to develop a statewide service delivery system for students who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities.
- ◆ Continue to improve efficiency and effectiveness of services supported by the Vinton site faculty and staff, including continued development of flexible and innovative services delivered in regional locations as needed and continue to work with Iowa State University to finalize recommendations for efficient use of physical facilities in concert with the feasibility study.
- ◆ Develop and implement a comprehensive professional development plan that will provide all Iowa service providers, including the IBSSS faculty and staff, with the knowledge and skills needed to contribute effectively to the continuous improvement of services to children who are blind or visually impaired and their families.

The following describe the School's activities during August 2006:

- ◆ The School provided two summer institutes for public school general education teachers who have students with visual impairments; one hour of graduate credit through the University of Northern Iowa was available to interested students.
 - ☑ The institutes were held in Council Bluffs on the ISD campus on August 7-8 and on the IBSSS campus in Vinton on August 10-11.
 - ☑ Paraprofessionals who work with children who are blind also attended as did teachers of the visually impaired and parents.
 - ☑ Nineteen individuals attended the Council Bluffs institute and 65 individuals attended the Vinton institute.
 - ☑ The training highlighted technology and independent living skills - especially care of clothing and meal preparation, hygiene and organization - for students who are blind. Recreational activities were also addressed.
- ◆ All faculty and staff returned to the campus in Vinton on August 16, 2006, to begin preparing for the 2006-07 school year. Interim Superintendent Jeananne Schild reviewed the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School Report and Work Plan presented to the Board of Regents on June 21, 2006 and to the State Board of Education on July 27, 2006 with all staff. The Work Plan includes the following components:

- ☑ Maintain a campus-based program in Vinton for students who have educational needs related to being blind or visually impaired.
- ☑ Serve students on-campus and off-campus for focused, shorter-term skill development.
- ☑ Implement the results of the feasibility study regarding the consolidation of school services in Vinton into the Old Main and Recreation buildings.
- ☑ Continue to explore other public uses for Palmer and Rice Halls and the Cottage, thereby saving considerable building and grounds maintenance costs.
- ☑ Continue to study staffing patterns and allocate personnel resources to address the educational needs of students.
- ☑ Continue to work with the AEAs, the Department of Education, and the Department for the Blind to develop a more unified service delivery model through which IBSSS will provide a leadership role in assuring equitable access to services across the state.
- ☑ Improve academic opportunities in math and science for students who are blind or visually impaired by working with secondary subject area teachers to support their technical expertise.
- ☑ Offer short-term, targeted learning opportunities for students in regional settings and on the Vinton campus during the school year, on weekends, and during the summer.
- ☑ Develop a strong early childhood network that connects families and young children to resources for the blind and visually impaired.
- ☑ Develop systematic, regional professional development opportunities that provide timely skills and information to teachers and administrators who support blind and visually impaired students in LEAs and AEAs.
- ◇ The implementation of the reduction in force plan was completed in August 2006 – seven merit positions were eliminated and three merit positions had hours reduced. Five individuals in merit positions exercised bumping rights and are employed at the School in other positions. One professional position was also eliminated in August 2006.
- ◇ Refurbishment of the classroom space, including painting and new carpet, has been completed.

The following describe the School's activities during September 2006:

- ◇ In September, there were 29 students enrolled on-campus at the School – four are day students transported from the Cedar Rapids area daily. Approximately 500 children who are blind or visually impaired are enrolled in off-campus services across the state.
- ◇ Extra-curricular activities in September included therapeutic horseback riding in Waterloo; track and field competition; and Special Olympics activities.
- ◇ IBSSS middle school and high school students who are taking their academic courses at the Vinton/Shellsburg Community Schools now have a full-time teacher of the visually impaired at IBSSS and in the public school. Students return to IBSSS for additional support, instruction, and the expanded core curriculum.

- ◇ In September, five IBSSS teachers began a Contemporary School Leadership class provided by Drake University and sponsored by Grant Wood AEA.
- ◇ A statewide training session on the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) Guidebook was provided in Des Moines in September. Participants included teachers of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility specialists, and state vision supervisors. Use of the ECC Guidebook will promote quality and consistency on the curriculum content for Iowa students who are blind or visually impaired.
- ◇ Program and leadership staff from the Iowa Department for the Blind and IBSSS began meeting in September. The purpose of the facilitated meetings is to provide an opportunity for communication, dialogue, building relationships, and more collaborative programming for Iowa students who are blind or visually impaired.
- ◇ A vision service work group met in September at the request of the Department of Education's Director of Children, Family, and Community Services. The work group included staff from IBSSS and from the Department for the Blind who provide services in technology, Braille, and library and media services. The work group will further enhance cooperation and collaboration in providing services to Iowa students who are blind or visually impaired.
- ◇ IBSSS uses a systems approach, called "Quality Programming for the Visually Impaired (QPVI)," to improve and promote quality in its programming. QPVI has also been implemented statewide for vision services in the AEAs.
- ◇ The IBSSS superintendent met with the AEA vision supervisors at their fall meeting in September to promote cooperation, communication, and collaboration.
- ◇ The Old Main Building Renovation Feasibility Study has been essentially completed. A state fire safety inspection in September revealed only minor issues; however, there will still be a cost connected to correcting them.
- ◇ Two IBSSS merit employees who had been laid off in August obtained full-time employment at one of the Regent universities.

These monthly reports will be submitted to the Government Oversight Committee to meet the requirements of HF 2527.